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SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: FOREIGN MINISTER AND KIRCHNER AIDE ON
U.S.-ARGENTINA RELATIONS

Classified By: Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne for Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Ambassador and EmbOffs met with Argentine Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana December 14 and discussed U.S.-Argentine relations, among other issues (septels). Ambassador raised the recent article in La Nacion newspaper that claimed President Kirchner had told Venezuelan President Chavez that Venezuelan-Argentine relations needed to be more commercial and less political in the run-up to the 2007 Presidential elections, implying that the U.S. would apply some political pressure if Venezuelan-Argentine relations were too close. Taiana dismissed the article, saying the GoA wants strong relations with both Venezuela and the U.S. He commented that the actions of the recently recalled Venezuelan Ambassador to Argentina were not appropriate for an ambassador, and bordered on meddling in the internal affairs of Argentina. In a separate telephone conversation, Presidential Legal and Technical Affairs Secretary and close Kirchner aide Carlos Zannini told Ambassador that the article was "not true" and a "falsification," stressing that President Kirchner wants a "serious and mature" relationship with the U.S. Both Taiana and Zannini expressed satisfaction at A/S Shannon's positive remarks on Argentina carried widely in the Argentine press this week. End Summary.

¶2. (C) During a December 14 meeting, Argentine Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana told Ambassador Wayne that the December 9 article in La Nacion newspaper that claimed President Kirchner had told Venezuelan President Chavez that Venezuelan-Argentine relations needed to be more commercial and less political because the Casa Rosada needed closer ties to the U.S. in the run-up to the 2007 presidential elections would not hold water for anyone who knows the Kirchner administration. He dismissed the article, stressing the GoA's strong desire to have close relations with both the U.S. and Venezuela.

¶3. (C) Taiana mentioned the recent removal of Venezuelan Ambassador Roger Capella. He said that Capella was probably engaging in activities within Argentina that were not appropriate for a foreign ambassador. Capella tepped on some toes, and Kirchner asked for his removal. Taiana said that the Venezuelan Ambassador's actions bordered on interfering with the internal affairs of Argentina.

¶4. (C) In a separate telephone conversation, Presidential Legal and Technical Affairs Secretary and close Kirchner aide Carlos Zannini also dismissed the article. Zannini, who was in the meeting between the presidents, told Ambassador Wayne that the article was "not true" and a "falsification," stressing that President Kirchner wants a "serious and mature" relationship with the U.S. "His conception of relations with the U.S. is very distinct" from that of Venezuela's president. President Kirchner wants more U.S. investment in Argentina and thus the focus on the commercial, Zannini said, but he realizes that such investment is needed for the long term and the can only happen if there are serious and mature relations and a set of policies that will

bring the investment.

15. (C) Zannini expressed his appreciation of the positive remarks about Argentina made by A/S Shannon in New York which were reported widely in the local media on December 13. Foreign Minister Taiana also expressed appreciation for A/S Shannon's remarks and indicated his desire to work closely and to dialogue intensely on a range of issues (septel).

16. (C) Comment: Both Foreign Minister Taiana and Secretary Zannini were quick to dismiss the La Nacion article and stress the importance of strong relations with the U.S. Although Taiana and Zannini seemed sincere in their explanations of what President Kirchner really said to Chavez, Embassy has heard all of the "right" things from GoA officials before and Ambassador Wayne had to reach-out first to the GoA about the article and ask for clarification. Ambassador will raise the issue in a meeting with Planning Minister Julio DeVido on December 18. End Comment.
WAYNE